



ON SCREEN

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
COVERING ALL ASPECTS OF
THE VIDEO GAMING HOBBY
VOL. 1 • NO. 2 • AUGUST 1997

ALL GAME TITLES, CHARACTERS,
AND DISTINCTIVE LIKENESSES
THEREOF ARE TRADEMARKS OF
THEIR RESPECTIVE COMPANIES.

Mega Man Madness

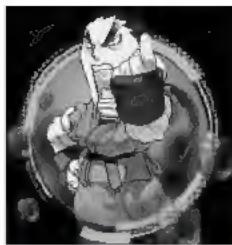
*Celebrating 10 years with the
Blue Bomber*





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WELCOME!

... to the second issue of *On Screen!* We're starting to see more interest in the newsletter, and we've gotten some encouraging feedback, so it looks like we're going to keep going with it for a while. We encourage everyone to contribute anything they feel is worthwhile and suggestions are always welcome.

As promised, we've got two entire pages devoted to the *Mega Man* series, and there's at least a little more of the original artwork we've been touting. Enjoy!

-TONY "XOT" MORSE
On Screen Editor

WEIRD REASONS TO BUY...



Formats: *Sega Saturn*,
Sony Playstation

Rarity: *Fairly Common*

Release Date: 1997

SHAWN "THE SHRED-MAN" DUMAS
On Screen Columnist

SUPER PUZZLE FIGHTER II TURBO

1. Dan in all of his magnificent taunting glory!
2. All of the wonderful Goodies including Akuma's voice samples: *Messatsu!*
3. Intermission: Morrigan is Shang Tsung! (not)
4. Dan!
5. It has Sakura in it. Therefore you must own it.
6. Same as #5 but insert Felicia in place of Sakura. (Yay!)
7. Da-an!
8. Watching your opponent's face turn ghastly white as they hear the sound of your entire screen full of power gems shatter and they know they can't do a thing about it.
9. Annoying the heck out of people by playing the ever-chattering Devilot.
10. Dan Dan Daaaan!
11. Play as Anita or Hsien-Ko's Paper Talisman. Now that's weird.
12. The TRAINING DEMO! Dan fans rejoice! Our pink-clad hero shows us how things are done!!

Xot's

CLASSIC CORNER

Perspectives on Retrogaming

Collecting

Sears

Carts

TONY "XOT" MORSE
On Screen Editor

I'm sure I'm not the only Atari 2600 collector who has wondered whether or not Sears cartridges are worth collecting. Well, I'm here to help you answer that question.

First off, my disclaimer is that everyone collects in their own specific way. You should get whatever games you want, and don't let anyone tell you otherwise. I'm just going to present some information, and my own collection as an example.

Now then. Personally, I've never collected label variations. A lot of collectors do; they want the plain label and the picture label, or the standard Activision label and the blue label variant, things like that. In general, not me. When I got the rare blue label *Pitfall*, I sold the old one. Same thing with my rare (supposedly Extremely Rare) Atari *Q*Bert*.

But Sears carts have always allured me, and I do collect these games specifically. For those of you who are new to this hobby, Atari manufactured an exact clone of the 2600 called the Sears Tele-Games, and Sears marketed it exclusively. Except for cosmetics, the two systems were identical, as were the games that came out on them.

For some reason, the titles of a lot of the games on the Sears system were different. But the screen you see is the same no matter what the label says.

I learned about these games back in the early 80's because my brother-in-law had a 2600 with about 30 games (a huge number back then) and one of them was called *Arcade Pinball* (the Sears variant of *Video Pinball*). For months I searched it out, only to be disappointed by finding dozens of *Video Pinball* carts. It wasn't until my father got *Video Pinball* for Christmas that I realized they were the same game.

The really odd thing is that none of the Sears boxes I've ever seen had pictures of the games on them. So it was very conceivable that someone could buy the same game twice and maybe get stuck with it... I don't remember how lenient Sears was with their return policy.

But all this strangeness intrigues me, so I like collecting the Sears carts. (Weird games are a passion of mine... I also count amongst my collection the rental-only *Final*

Continued on Page 5

Mega Man, Mega Myth, Mega Legend

Some thoughts on the history and appeal of the Mega Man series

TONY "XOT" MORSE

On Screen Editor

There's always been something about the Mega Man series that we never seem to tire of. Even when we've just finished an annoying stage, or after we've played one of the lesser games in the series, our thoughts always seem to head in the same direction: "You know what they should do in the next game..."

You see, we always expect, and always want, that next game. After ten years, and about a dozen titles, we still sit around discussing potential 'Bots for Mega Man 9 and Mega Man X4.

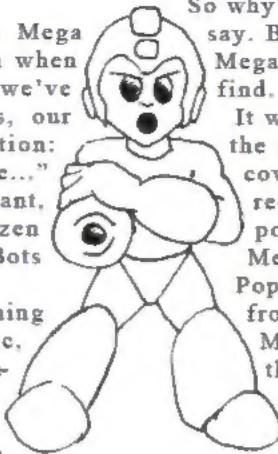
The original Mega Man was really a stunning game. It had stellar graphics, outstanding music, and was the first game that allowed you complete it in *any order you wanted*. This was really something, because now you had to figure out not just *how* to beat each stage, but also *when*. The gameplay was solid and it featured some of the most imaginative characters ever. Its influence can

clearly be seen in later games like Metroid.

So why wasn't Mega Man an instant hit? It's tough to say. Bad marketing, perhaps, or small distribution. Mega Man is still one of the hardest in the series to find.

It was obvious that publicity played a big part in the success of Mega Man 2, after it captured the cover of Nintendo Power. In fact, Mega Man was re-released after Mega Man 2 gained enormous popularity. Capcom again topped that one with Mega Man 3, another top seller.

Popular opinion is that the series went downhill from there, and sales (and resulting rarity) of Mega Man 4 and 5 are certainly indicative of this. Capcom wasn't even planning on releasing Mega Man 6 in the U.S.; it was in fact distributed by Nintendo. At this point, though, the NES was well past its prime and MM6



Continued on Page 4

A quick breakdown of the eight games

MEGA MAN

System: NES

The 'Bots: Bomb Man, Cut Man, Elec Man, Fire Man, Guts Man, Ice Man

Rating: ★★★★

The original Mega Man featured some of the coolest 'Bots ever and was the starting point for this incredible series. Long stages, great music and tough bosses highlight this one.

Notes: Try to beat Guts Man before you get the Magnet Beam. While the platform jumps are tough, having the Guts weapon makes the Elec Man stage infinitely easier.

MEGA MAN 2

System: NES

The 'Bots: Air Man, Bubble Man, Crash Man, Flash Man, Heat Man, Metal Man, Quick Man, Wood Man

Rating: ★★★★★

The crown jewel in the series. Incredible graphics, some outrageous Wily stage bosses and overall, the closest to perfection in the series. A couple of really easy and short stages, but the difficulty setting helps a bit.

Notes: If you didn't already know, hitting Metal Man with a Metal Blade in the Wily stage kills him with one hit on Normal, and 3 on Difficult.

MEGA MAN 3

System: NES

The 'Bots: Gemini Man, Hard Man, Magnet Man, Needle Man, Shadow Man, Snake Man, Spark Man, Top Man

Rating: ★★★★½

Another excellent game, which introduced us to Rush (even though the Rush Marine was useless) and is the only Mega Man game not to feature an ice, water, or fire 'Bot. But the annoying Doc Robot stages prevent the five-star rating.

MEGA MAN 4

System: NES

The 'Bots: Bright Man, Dive Man, Drill Man, Dust Man, Pharaoh Man, Ring Man, Skull Man, Toad Man

Rating: ★★½

While the Mega Buster was a nice touch, everything about this game is inferior to its predecessors. Several of the weapons are repetitive and the music is extremely bland.

MEGA MAN 5

System: NES

The 'Bots: Charge Man, Crystal Man, Gravity Man, Gyro Man, Napalm Man, Star Man, Stone Man, Wave Man

Rating: ★★★

Capcom seems to learn from MM 4 by adding a few less generic weapons and revamping the music, as well as boosting the difficulty. Not bad, but not the best.

MEGA MAN 6

System: NES

The 'Bots: Blizzard Man, Centaur Man, Flame Man, Knight Man, Plant Man, Tomahawk Man, Wind Man, Yamato Man

Rating: ★★★½

Again, an improvement over 5, most notably in the graphics department, but some neat new innovations in the stages themselves. Dreadfully woeful 'Bots bring it down a bit.

MEGA MAN 7

System: SNES

The 'Bots: Burst Man, Cloud Man, Freeze Man, Junk Man, Shade Man, Slash Man, Spring Man, Turbo Man

Rating: ★★★★

Frighteningly annoying bosses really hurt the replay value of an otherwise flawless game. Outstanding music and graphics, great innovations in game play, and even Turbo Man really isn't that stupid.

MEGA MAN 8

System: Playstation, Saturn

The 'Bots: Aqua Man, Astro Man, Clown Man, Frost Man, Grenade Man, Search Man, Sword Man, Tengu Man

Rating: ★★★★

Simply phenomenal graphics and music, but a lot of rehash from 7. Cool 'Bots and anime cinema scenes bring its rating up, but the horrendous Astro Man stage, short Wily stage and "Jump, Jump, Slide, Slide" bring it back to 4 stars.

Astro Man, Astro Myth, Astro Legend? Nahh, it's not the same.

Continued from Page 3

showed up for \$14.99 in discount bins everywhere.

The series jumped into the 16-bit era with Mega Man X and Mega Man 7, both outstanding games. However, Mega Man 7 was slow in coming, and when Capcom abandoned the 16-bit market, Mega Man 7 and X3 disappeared (along with the eagerly awaited Breath of Fire III), making these titles instant collectibles. And, of course, Mega Man 8 revitalized and revolutionized the series by making the leap to the 32 bit consoles, the first Mega Man game to be released on multiple platforms.

The Mega Man series is one of those things that you link your memories to. It's easy to think along the lines of a Mega Man game, like, "Yeah, that was my freshman year of college 'cause I was going through Mega Man 5 then," or "No, that must've been in high school 'cause Mega Man 3 was just coming out." And a lot of those

hours in high school and college were spent on the same game, because nobody beats a Mega Man game just once. You have to go through two or three times, to find all the hidden items, figure out which weapon beats which boss... and to prove you can beat each boss without it.

Every Mega Man game is enjoyable. Granted, there are some that we enjoy replaying more than others, and there are some parts of each game that we truly despise (the Doc Robot stages in 3, the Astro Man stage in 8, the Japanese Mask boss in 7). And coming up with your own 'Bots is always great fun. (Toxin Man! Scream Man! Tangle Man!)

If you have never played any of the Mega Man games, I don't see how you can call yourself a video game player. The series will always rank with the Mario and Street Fighter series as one of the greatest and most influential collections of video games of all time.

The Top 5 MEGA MAN 'BOTS

5. CRASH MAN Mega Man 2



A classic 'Bot with an attitude. Crash Man is probably the toughest foe in Mega Man 2, and the weapon you get, the Crash Bomb, was the first to let you open new passages.

4. ELEC MAN Mega Man

His stage music was the 'MASK' theme; how could he NOT be cool? Plus, he didn't need any guns on his arms to hurl the most dreaded weapon in the original Mega Man.



3. TENGU MAN Mega Man 8

"Here you go!" Granted, the voices help him a lot, but his really nifty arsenal and multiple attack styles make him a cool 'Bot no matter what he says.

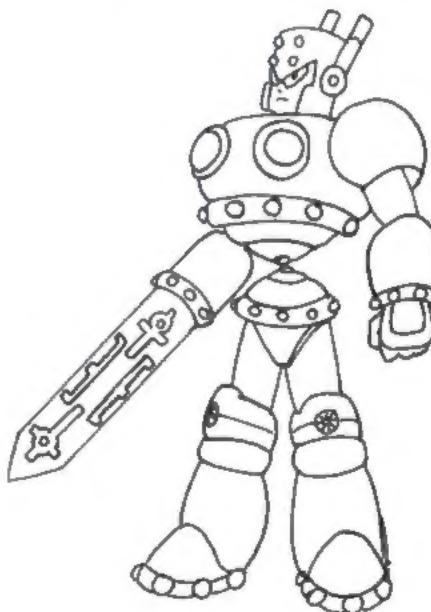


2. SHADOW MAN Mega Man 3

The definition of a cool 'Bot, Shadow Man had the look, the attacks, the weapons, and cool stage music. And he's Ninja. That right there is enough to earn him a spot.



1. SWORD MAN Mega Man 8



The most atypical of the Wily 'Bots, with an honorable attitude and a body that splits in half, Sword Man is completely unique in the Mega Man series. You can't help but like the guy.

Special thanks to Shawn "The Shred-Man" Dumas for his work on the Top 5 'Bots artwork as well as this month's cover.

Nice shot.

Next Issue

We discuss the premature death of the Super NES and check out a little-known classic, Ms. Pac Attack. Plus, some questions and answers on the "classic" status of the original Nintendo Entertainment System.

E-MAIL US!



Gyruss worth having on three different systems

Formats: MacMAME, N.E.S., Atari 2600
Publishers: Centuri, Ultra, Parker Bros.
Release Dates: 1983, 1988, 1984

TONY "XOT" MORSE

On Screen Editor

Gyruss, a cult classic but less-than-famous arcade title, is one of the few games to make it to a home system in three different eras. And it is with great pleasure that I report all three to be excellent translations.

The arcade game features a Tempest-style 360° playfield with your ship on the perimeter and the enemies in the middle. Unlike Tempest, Gyruss features a joystick attached via a rubber cord that allows you to "swivel" the joystick into all 360 degree positions. Wherever you move the stick, your ship makes a beeline to that point. After a certain number of levels, you land on one of the nine planets and enter a Galaga-style bonus stage.

The most impressive graphical effect in this game is the twisting and turning of the ships as they enter the stage for the first time. Never have you seen maneuverability like this! Spirals, dead stops and pattern reversals create an almost mesmerizing effect on the player.

Amazingly, all these elements have been retained in the Atari 2600

version. Even the soundtrack remains intact, and surprisingly well done on the 2600. Despite its two-sprite capabilities, flicker is kept to a minimum and all those bizarre and impressive intro formations are correct and uncompromised.



Gyruss features a unique cabinet design as well as unique control.

The only thing omitted from the 2600 version is sound effects. The music is the only thing that you'll get out of your speakers. But this is not a huge price to pay for a game that doesn't seem possible on this system. It's rare, and there's a reason for it: Few people are willing to give their copy up.

The N.E.S. version brings us what

the 2600 could not: Near-perfect arcade graphics. Yes, the soundtrack is retained, and the sound effects are present. However, Ultra apparently decided the original game wasn't good enough, and added several extra features, the most obvious being boss creatures before each planet. The bosses aren't terribly difficult and they recycle rather quickly... so it's almost a wonder why they were included at all. At best, they're a minor annoyance, and an excuse to use up another N.E.S.-added feature, the super missile.

The Super Missile is just a shot that goes through everything until it hits the center. It won't destroy objects that are normally indestructible, but it will destroy a segment of a boss with one hit. These added features don't really hurt the game any, thankfully, but I can't say they add all that much.

The MacMAME version is, of course, the creme de la creme. A flawless transition, albeit difficult to control with a keyboard at times.

I rarely advocate keeping multiple versions of a title, but this is an exception. Keep the 2600 version because it's truly a programming marvel. Keep the N.E.S. version because it's hard to find and for the (slight) added challenge. And keep the MacMAME version because it's absolutely perfect.

To collect or not to collect? What to do about 2600 Sears cartridges

Continued from Page 1

Fight Guy.) They come in at least two label variations, like the Atari carts, with or without a picture.

There is, of course, a catch. Not all Atari games have a Sears equivalent, and, despite what I've already told you, vice versa. There are three "Sears Only" games, Stellar Track, Steeplechase and Submarine Commander, all of which rank somewhere between Rare and Extremely Rare. These ones should be must-haves for any serious Atari collector.

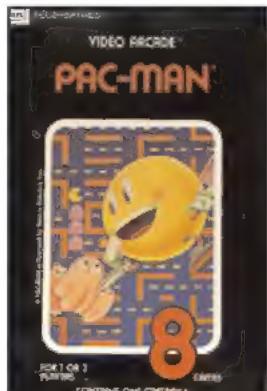
As for the rest, it's tough to say. In general, the Atari carts seem more collectable, because they are perceived as the 'originals' or somehow more 'genuine.' If you're collecting for historical value, go for the Atari carts first. If you're collecting for playability, it doesn't matter which ones you grab, as they're identical.

The rarities of the games are reasonably comparable; a rare

Best assured you'll see plenty of these in your hunt for Sears carts. The reverse does not feature any screen shots. →

Atari game will be at least a rare Sears game, and all the common Sears carts are common Atari carts. But there are a few cases in which the Sears version of a common cart is really hard to find. Dodger Cars, Demons to Diamonds, and Dare Diver are all considered Extremely Rare while their Atari sisters are reasonably common.

The bottom line is that it's up to you what you want to collect, and why. I personally find the whole Atari-Sears thing interesting. Just imagine if you saw a Saturn game called Insectoid Adventure only to get it home and find out it's Bug!



Sears - Atari title conversion chart

Arcade Golf	Miniature Golf	Maze	Slot Racers
Arcade Pinball	Video Pinball	Maze Mania	Maze Craze
Baseball	Home Run	Memory Match	Hunt & Score
Breakaway IV	Breakout	Outer Space	Star Ship
Cannon Man	Human	Poker Plus	Casino
Capture	Flag Capture	Pong Sports	Video Olympics
Chase	Surround	Race	Indy 500
Checkers	Video Checkers	Slots	Slot Machine
Circus	Circus Atari	Space Combat	Space War
Dare Diver	Sky Diver	Speedway II	Street Racer
Dodger Cars	Dodge 'Em	Spelling	Hangman
Gunslinger	Outlaw	Soccer	Pele's Soccer
Math	Basic Math	Tank Plus	Combat
		Target Fun	Air Sea Battle

While we anxiously await Final Fantasy 7...



SHAWN "THE SHRED-MAN" DUMAS
On Screen Columnist

Let's face it. When it comes to role-playing games, Square is GOD. No one can even come close to topping them.

Now, Playstation-RPG starved gamers (and if you only own a PS, you're RPG starved, end of story) we are getting ever closer to that glorious date when Final Fantasy 7 will grace American store shelves.

What can we expect from FF7? Well, let's just look at Square's

track record. If we ignore the less-than-great Secret of Evermore (made by an American team of programmers, rather than the standard Japanese team), every new game they've put out has been superior to its predecessor. I remember trying to play Final Fantasy after playing Final Fantasy 2 for the first time - it just isn't the same. Final Fantasy 2, 3 and Chrono Trigger are easily in my top 5 favorite games of all time.

Square's RPG's are famous for their deep, involved quests. The stories suck you in to a fantastic world where technology meets mysticism. The characters all have their own stories and are well developed. I've sat down for hours unable to turn myself away from these games - dying to see what happens next. Weiss and Hickman: how 'bout Final Fantasy novels? They'd sell!

And now, Final Fantasy comes to 32-bit. We've seen the demo. And we want more. I'm expecting the best Final Fantasy ever, even if it means that looking at the original Final Fantasy will make me sick to my stomach. Don't disappoint me, Square.



Square never disappoints in the graphics department.

...Wild Arms helps fill the void



SHAWN "THE SHRED-MAN" DUMAS
On Screen Columnist

Note: Normally our policy is to review games after going through them a few times, letting the newness and hype wear off so we can get an honest opinion of the game. This time, we're making an exception.

If you're anything like me you were leery of buying Wild Arms after being severely disappointed by Beyond the Beyond. Without fear of contradiction, I think I can honestly say that Wild Arms more than makes up for Beyond the Beyond. This is what a next-gen RPG is supposed to be!

The setting is kind of like Final Fantasy III meets the old west. This gives the game a kind of unique and refreshing atmosphere. The music is also kind of western; you feel like you should be in a cowboy flick.

The battle system looks like it was borrowed from Final Fantasy 7. 3-D polygonal characters battle it out in fully animated sequences with rotating camera angles. The monsters in Wild Arms are some of the most unique I've seen yet. Not only that, but it was over 10 hours into the game before I saw a single palette-swapped monster!

The world you explore is big. Towns, castles, and dungeons are huge and require thorough exploration. Everything is highly detailed as well. And like most great RPG's, there are some puzzles to figure out before you can proceed. While many involve simply moving blocks and statues, there are also some very clever puzzles to test your mental capacity.

Perhaps one of the biggest thrills for me is the unique customizing features. Sure, like most RPG's you can rename the characters and change window colors. But how many RPG's do you know of that let you have spells like "Get a Life" or "Zappity-Zap"? Wild Arms features the ability to rename your spells! Not only that, but if you're not fond of the menu icons, you can redraw them pixel by pixel.

Wild Arms also allows you to choose which spells you acquire by bringing an item called "Crest

Graph" to the magic guild and binding the spell of your choice to it. Better yet, if you decide you hate that spell, you can unbind it at any time and choose a new one.

For me, Wild Arms is a winner. Great RPG's can keep me up all night, wanting to see what happens next. I'm even keeping a notebook to write down clues - that shows how deep this game is. (Granted, I've only written down one thing so far, but still...)

Wild Arms has the potential to be an all-time favorite. This definitely fills the gap left in our RPG libraries and makes the wait for Final Fantasy 7 seem not so bad. Definitely worth checking out.



Wild Arms' combat scenes are what Beyond the Beyond's should have been.